



Effectiveness of Counter-radicalisation Policies: Preliminary Research Findings and Recommendations from European Experts in Deradicalisation and Counter-Terrorism

Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality (DARE) – EU H2020 funded project

This Policy Brief is based on the preliminary results of the analysis of existing security policies and interventions in radicalisation and counter-radicalisation at the EU, national and local levels. The findings draw on analysis of around 200 policy documents as well as on 25 interviews with experts from policy and practice in fields related to counter-radicalisation, anti-extremism and deradicalisation. All interviewees are practitioners of counter-radicalisation, countering violent extremism (CVE) and deradicalisation – representing a range of institutions at the national and the EU levels (RAN, Europol). Researchers interviewed experts from Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, the Netherlands, Tunisia, Turkey, Spain, the United Kingdom and Israel between January and March 2018. The selected experts provided their assessment of current dynamics of radicalisation processes in Europe and on the strategies to counteract them. The policy recommendations set out below reflect their views and assessments as practitioners and not necessarily those of the DARE consortium members.

Key Findings

Current trends in radicalisation

Expert interviewees identify the growing threat of violent extremism – both Islamist and nationalist – as one of one of the current main outcomes of radicalisation.

Elements contributing to the perception of an internal threat

- a) a range of negative consequences of the lack of cultural, social and economic integration of citizens into their societies, as well as a failure of States to provide adequate venues and support to cater for positive integration for all;
- b) the growing polarisation between rich/poor, people/elites, different cultures and religions;
- c) socio-spatial inequalities, from urban ghettoization to inequalities between rich/poor areas and towns through to divisions between the global North and South;
- d) the increasing extension of various forms of radicalisation to middle class youth from all backgrounds;
- e) the resurgence of extreme-right violent groups/militias/vigilantes.

Elements contributing to the perception of an external threat

- a) influence/actions of the so-called ISIS foreign fighters and other European citizens (and their children) returning mainly from Syria;
- b) the spill-over effect of tensions into European countries, through diaspora from conflict-torn regions and other diverse non-diasporic support groups.



Role of social media

Experts recognised that **social media** has a strong impact in particular on young people's vision of the world and thus contributes to the generation of their radical – both Islamist and far-right – beliefs. However, they suggest it is important also **not to overestimate** the influence of such new media. Experts noted a **growing lack of trust in content and tools encountered on the internet** among youth. This suggests that **other milieus where radicalisation processes take place require equal attention. These include:** families, schools, religious networks and facilities, political parties, youth organisations, sports centres, clubs, gangs, neighbourhoods, paramilitary organisations, demonstrations or prisons. The **potential positive effects of the Internet should however also not be underestimated** (e.g. providing a forum for public debate).

With a view to reducing the risk of radicalisation (both Islamist and far-right), experts highlight the need to invest more in **strengthening communication/relationships with younger cohorts of Europeans** including through the use of social media.

It is important that European Institutions and Member States treat radicalised individuals (or those on the way to becoming radicalised) as a part of the society and also part of their value-based or religious environments, and not ostracise them. This could support their more open communication with State structures (central and local) and NGOs and facilitate defusing tensions and the collective search for non-violent resolutions to such conflicts.

Focus on the local/community level

In counteracting radicalisation a focus on the local community level is crucial. Many European countries are launching programmes to combat radicalisation, which are visibly more locally oriented (using a bottom-up logic) than centralised (employing a top-down logic). Countries are increasingly investing in training programmes for schools, teachers, police officers and security professionals. According to interviewed experts, this **locally structured counter-radicalisation perspective facilitates conversations and (re)establishes relations between authorities and individuals/groups.** This contributes to confronting radicalisation at the level closest to the personal, social and emotional experience of individuals and, in this way, encourages the nurturing of social cohesion as a long-term counter-radicalisation policy. *It is therefore important that such programmes targeting groups at risk of radicalisation are community owned or led rather than enacted upon communities by law enforcement agencies which may themselves be viewed with suspicion.*

Evaluating counter/de-radicalisation programmes

There is a need for reliable evaluation of counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation policies and programmes. It is crucial to include in all counter/deradicalisation policies and programmes impact assessment measures that ensure rigorous and fair evaluation by the practitioners themselves, by funders, States and civil society representatives. Sound monitoring will improve the capacities of practitioners to adjust to a quickly changing security environment in Europe.

The design of such evaluation systems is extremely timely because prevention of counter-radicalisation is generally a new area of state policy in EU countries – in which public funds are being invested – and a booming entrepreneurial market (in particular concerning jihadist home-grown radicalisation processes). In particular in the light of encountering poorly structured programmes producing highly questionable results over the past three to five years, expert interviewees note that it is vital that these counter-radicalisation and deradicalisation policies and programmes are monitored and evaluated in order to ensure that they are achieving the desired goals.



Moving beyond securitisation and going global

There is a need for a more long-term, societal approach in counter-radicalisation policies. Current security, counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies do not take sufficient account of long-term and socio-economic factors, neither at the national nor at the European level. One of the reasons is that structural factors are more complex and data concerning them are gathered and analysed by different governmental agencies than those responsible for counter-radicalisation policies. This is even more complicated at the local level, because cities and local governments have limited leverage in terms of improving the economic environment.

The response to radicalisation should be global. Regional, national and international cooperation is stressed as an important step towards effective counter-radicalisation. This cooperation is relatively well developed in the sphere of counter-terrorism (i.e. at the level of intelligence-sharing) but less so when it comes to the prevention of radicalisation.

Expert interviewees recognised both the benefits and challenges of sharing good practice with colleagues from other States. On the one hand, whilst recognising the success of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in facilitating the exchange of good practice among Member States, experts felt that the transfer of good practice between European countries was often inhibited, notably because of crucial differences in legislative frameworks or political contexts. On the other hand, experts noted that radicalisation processes being different according to country and region, it is important to proceed with caution in transferring solutions, even if they have been successful in other regions and/or in other countries. In short, there is no “one size fits all” solution in this area. Transferring good practices requires careful tailoring.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

To European Institutions

1. Conduct an in-depth fundamental rights assessment of the current European counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation instruments, in consultation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, experts from civil society and academia, to ensure that measures are implemented with due respect of human rights standards including equality and non-discrimination, the principles of proportionality, objectivity and respect for rule of law;
2. Conduct an in-depth assessment of the multi-layered impact on economy, health, well-being and social cohesion of untargeted, widespread counter-terrorism/counter-radicalisation measures, which focus on CVE/CT operations on groups/individuals based on visible characteristics of diversity.
3. Halt any new legislative or non-legislative proposal in this field before publishing an impact assessment of current instruments, including the EU counter-terrorism directive for which the deadline for transposition is only in 2019.

To Member States

1. Develop a multiagency approach in prevention and counter-radicalisation policies, in particular at local level, including also NGOs where relevant, while preserving their autonomy of action and decision;
2. Work at local/community level, engaging in spaces such as neighbourhoods, local civil society organisations, families, churches, schools, cultural/youth centres.
3. Prevention/counter-radicalisation policies need to be transversal, across policy fields, while ensuring reference to micro structures, including individuals (need for tailor-made solutions);



4. Monitor and support returnees and their families and former far-right militants, offenders and terrorists with the view to effectively prevent further radicalisation and do not only focus on repressive security policies;
5. Facilitate communication between individuals (in particular from groups at risk of (violent) radicalisation) and the local police and security services, including via training and official cooperation with civil society organisations and/or social workers;
6. Invest in education for long-term prevention and counter-radicalisation; include schools in prevention processes in a structured way;
7. Support schools (and NGOs) to promote civic activism, use of democratic institutions and civic values to empower young people and boost confidence in democratic institutions;
8. Support community institutions and leaders to better understand radicalisation within their communities and to create ownership of resilience mechanisms;
9. Communicate to the broader public on the existence (and effectiveness) of counter/de-radicalisation programmes as part of awareness raising campaigns;
10. Operate take down of illegal content on internet within the limits of human rights law and support NGOs to develop effective alternative pathways and narratives.

To NGOs

1. Promote civic activism, use of democratic institutions and civic values to support all individuals, including young people to achieve their goals and defend their rights within the realm of democracy;
2. Promote intercultural and intercommunity empathy and confidence, in collaboration with schools, local communities, neighbourhoods, and with the support of local authorities;
3. Generate effective alternative pathways to radical ideology, in particular, but not only, through the use of social media by and for young people;
4. Establish offline interactions with and between young people through community cohesion programmes and exchanges (i.e. in youth centres, community meetings, etc.).



What is DARE?

Project Name	DARE : Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality
Coordinator	Professor Hilary Pilkington, University of Manchester, UK
Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The University of Manchester (UNIMAN) (coordinator)- Anadolu University (AU)- Collegium Civitas University (Civ)- École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)- The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar (IPI)- Research Unit on Right-Wing Extremism (FORENA)- European Network Against Racism (ENAR)- The German Institute on Radicalisation (GIRDS)- The Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg (HSE)- Leiden University (UL)- Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)- Panteion University (PUA)- The University of Sfax (SFAX)- Teeside University (TEES)- The People for Change Foundation (PfC)- The University of Oslo (UiO)- The University of Birmingham (UNIBHAM)
Countries	Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Greece, France, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.
Funding Scheme	This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 725349
Duration	4 years. Start: 01/05/2017 - End: 30/04/2021
Budget	€5 million
Vision	DARE proposes a new approach to radicalisation research as an alternative to traditional terrorism research that focuses primarily on acts and agents of terrorism. By understanding radicalisation as a <i>social</i> phenomenon, the project aims to broaden understanding of radicalisation, demonstrate that it is not located in any one religion or community and understand better the long-term origins, causes and psychological, emotional and social dynamics of radicalisation.
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To understand radicalisation trends in historical, spatial and political context including their interaction and potential for cumulative effect.



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2. To identify new trends in receptivity to radicalisation especially in relation to youth and gender and extend the field to the study of non-radicalisation trajectories.
 3. To investigate the interaction of structure and agency in radicalization through the intersection of societal (macro), group (meso) and individual (micro) factors in individual trajectories.
 4. To enhance understanding of the role of inequality and perceived injustice in radicalisation.
 5. To understand the relative significance of religion, ideology and extra-ideological (affective) dimensions of radicalisation and how they are interwoven.
 6. To develop new evaluation and intervention toolkits to counter radicalisation and maximize their impact through active collaboration with policy maker and civil society organisation stakeholders.

Website

<http://www.dare-h2020.org>

For more information

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